

## Kosmasâ€™ Statement on White House Dropping Controversial Veterans Health Care Proposal

(Washington, DC) – On Wednesday morning, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) joined 68 of her colleagues from both parties in sending a letter to the White House expressing their opposition to a proposal that would have required veterans to use private insurance to pay for treatment of service-related injuries. Shortly after the letter was sent, White House officials met with leaders of the Veterans’ Service Organizations. Later in the afternoon, it was announced that the Administration had decided not to move forward with the proposal. After the announcement, Congresswoman Kosmas issued the following statement:

“We must do everything we can to protect the benefits that our veterans have earned, which is why I strongly opposed this proposal. The president made the right decision in heeding our call to drop consideration of a plan that would have forced veterans to pay for treatment of the injuries they suffered in service to our country. I look forward to working with the Administration and my colleagues in Congress on measures to support our veterans, such as making the VA health care system more effective and securing funding for the new Orlando VA Medical Center.”

The full text of the letter is can be found below:

March 17, 2009

Dear Mr. President,

We first want to take this opportunity to thank you for the clear commitment your administration’s budget outline makes to our nation’s veterans. The proposed 10 percent increase in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for next fiscal year is truly historic. We believe the 2010 budget will ensure the VA never again faces the chronic under-funding that prevented countless veterans from receiving the health benefits they have earned.

While we strongly support your plans to increase funding for the VA by \$25 billion over the next five years, it is with equal conviction that we oppose the proposal to bill veterans’ private health insurance plans for care and treatment of service-connected injuries or disabilities.

We do not give our veterans health care - they earn it - and it would be unacceptable for the VA to ask our veterans to pay for the treatment of injuries received while serving our nation in uniform. That responsibility belongs to the VA, and it would be wrong to outsource the responsibility of covering the care of those veterans to private insurance companies.

Additionally, this proposal could harm our veterans and their families in unintended, yet very serious ways, jeopardizing their families’ health care and even negatively affecting veterans’ employment opportunities. Billing a veteran’s private health insurance for the treatment of service-connected injuries could lead to increased health care premiums, and could potentially discourage employers from hiring veterans.

We know you are committed to expanding employment opportunities for veterans. Already this year, your administration and Congress have worked to create countless jobs for veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but this proposal would undermine our efforts.

We urge you to take this proposal off the table, and let us instead focus on ensuring that our veterans receive the full care and benefits they have earned. The moral obligation our nation has to our veterans demands nothing less. We are happy to discuss these issues with you further as we move toward a final budget for the VA.

We would like to thank you again for your commitment to improving care for the men and women who have borne the battle, and who have sacrificed their health and well-being in serving their country. Thank you for your service to our nation.

Sincerely,

Glenn Nye

Anne Kirkpatrick

John Hall

Gabrielle Giffords

Diane Watson

Larry Kissel

Steve Kagen

Eric Massa

Bill Foster

Bart Stupak

Harry Teague

Dan Boren

Michael Arcuri

John Barrow

Jerry McNerney

Tom Perriello

Carol Shea-Porter

Travis Childers

Rob Wittman

Ben Lujan

Tom Rooney

Sanford Bishop

Dina Titus

Ciro Rodriguez

Joe Sestak

Betsey Markey

Madeleine Bordallo

Suzanne Kosmas

Marion Barry

Alan Grayson

Harry Mitchell

Dennis Kucinich

Michael Michaud

John Dingell

William Delahunt

Ron Klein

Ben Chandler

Mazie Hirono

Betty Sutton

Robert Wexler

Rick Larson

Tim Bishop

John Boccieri

James Oberstar

Mary Jo Kilroy

Collin Peterson

Leonard Boswell

Lois Capps

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin

Daniel B. Maffei

Mike Honda

Debbie Halvorson

Michael McMahon

Mike McIntyre

Phil Hare

Charles Rangel

Lincoln Davis

Dennis Cardoza

Charlie Wilson

Bobby Bright

Gary Peters

Joe Courtney

Jim Himes

Jason Altmire

Peter Welch

Martin Heinrich

Parker Griffith

Mike Ross